

Meeting Summary
Outer Coast MRC Work Group
Montesano, WA
September 5, 2008 10 am – 3 pm

Copies of meeting handouts are available by contacting Brie Van Cleve at vancfbv@dfw.wa.gov or (360) 902-2750.

Welcome and Introductions

Brie Van Cleve, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and coordinator for the WDFW coastal marine resource committee (MRC) program welcomed meeting attendees and stated the meeting purpose was to solicit local input in developing the coastal MRC program, specifically an articulation of program priorities and the development of indicators of progress or benchmarks. Brie thanked attendees for participating and said that, although this work group will only meet twice in its current form, WDFW envisions creating an advisory body to coordinate and support the work of the possible 5 coastal MRCs on a programmatic level, similar to the role of the Northwest Straits (NWS) Commission. 28 people were in attendance.

Recent Ocean Policy Activity and MRCs

John Hansen with WA Dept of Natural Resources and Michele Culver, WDFW Region 6 Director, reviewed recent ocean policy activity on the national, west coast, and state level and discussed coastal MRCs as an outcome to an identified need to incorporate citizens more in coastal and ocean management, protection, and restoration as well as building and maintaining healthy coastal communities.

A concern was expressed about the need to ensure meaningful citizen input into the State Ocean Caucus (SOC). John and Michele discussed connecting citizens to SOC activities through WDFW's coastal MRC program. Since hire of the program coordinator, Brie has been asked to update the SOC on coastal MRC activity at each SOC meeting. A question was asked about funding available to implement recommendations of the Ocean Action Plan. Currently, there isn't any direct state funding to support the ocean action plan; however, it is anticipated that, through the West Coast Governor's Agreement, there will potentially be some federal funding to support West Coast-wide initiatives. In the meantime, there may be funding for specific work, such as derelict gear removal, that could be used to help further the recommendations in the ocean action plan. Michele also clarified that, although some kind of coordination is highly beneficial, MRCs are independent of the SOC and don't need SOC permission or approval for actions. A concern was raised that forming coastal MRCs is an unfunded mandate. Brie answered that formation is voluntary, but also that WDFW is able to provide funding to counties to explore whether or not they want to establish an MRC.

Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative

Duane Fagergren with the Puget Sound Partnership and also a member of the Northwest Straits (NWS) Commission recounted the history of the NWS Initiative and discussed factors that made the NSW Initiative (and the 7 MRCs) a success. Duane noted how important is it to keep MRC participation diverse and the importance of including industries (fishing and other) on a MRC. Duane discussed the utility of benchmarks in focusing and structuring MRC and NWS Commission activity. Performance benchmarks were developed at the Initiative's inception and included setting up marine protected areas (MPAs). This benchmark proved too controversial and was reformulated when the NWS Initiative revised their benchmarks recently. Duane noted the importance of diverse participation on MRCs and managing funding sources effectively. Brie mentioned funding levels of NSW MRCs over the years (from \$55,000 to \$97,000 annually) as compared to coastal MRC funding levels currently at approx. \$40,000 per county. A portion of these funds is for part time staffing and travel of MRC members. Duane advocated for planning for future funding opportunities and suggested keeping elected officials involved to promote their support and understanding of the entire MRC process. Duane also mentioned the session focused on coastal MRCs at the NWS annual training workshop in Port Angeles Nov 7 and 8 and encouraged attendance.

Grays Harbor MRC Workbook

Lee Napier announced that the first Grays Harbor Exploratory Committee meeting scheduled for Sept 10 has been postponed until Oct 22 to accommodate all interested participants, specifically those involved in the fishing industry. John Kleim and Debbie Holden with Creative Community Solutions recounted the Grays Harbor County MRC strategic planning process involving interviews and research culminating in the Grays Harbor County MRC Workbook and a series of MRC exploratory meetings set to begin Oct 22. Grays Harbor County intends to use this citizen-driven process to deliver a recommendation on the formation of a Grays Harbor County MRC to the Board of County Commissioners by February.

Discussion of Statute Highlights

Brie walked through highlights of RCW 36.125: MRCs are formed by counties and counties can delegate the task of running the MRC to a city within its jurisdiction or a lead entity. MRC participation must include local government, local residents, scientific experts, affected economic, recreational, and environmental interest and the counties must invite tribal participation. County residents may petition the county to form an MRC. The outer coast MRC program is created within WDFW to coordinate and fund MRC activity. The purpose and activities of MRC program and individual MRCs as defined in the statute was also discussed (see RCW 36.125.030 and 36.125.010, respectively).

Announcement: Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Management Plan Review

Lauren Theodore, Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, announced the review and update of the Sanctuary's management plan. Seven scoping meetings will be held between Sept 29 and Oct 5 and the public comment period is open from Sept 15 - Nov 14. For information, meeting times and locations or to comment, email ocnmsmanagementplan@noaa.gov, visit <http://olympiccoast.noaa.gov/protection/mpr/welcome.html> or call George Galasso or Liam Antrim at (360) 457-6622.

Outer Coast MRC Program Priorities

Brie introduced several program priorities passed down in the statute and brought several additional ideas for discussion. See "Outer Coast MRC Program Benchmarks-Priorities" document for results of this discussion.

Accountability and Performance Measures

Brie discussed the goal and benchmarks of the NWS Marine Conservation Initiative and how they could apply or serve as the coastal MRC jumping off point. See "Outer Coast MRC Program Benchmarks-Priorities" document for more detail.

Next Meeting

Next Outer Coast MRC Program Work Group meeting October 10 at the Montesano City Hall, 10 am – 3 pm.

(Note: The first Grays Harbor County Exploratory Committee meeting is October 22. This meeting is organized and hosted by Grays Harbor County. For more information contact Lee Napier at lnapier@co.grays-harbor.wa.us).

Flip chart notes:

Eliminate emergency management and other areas covered by other entities
Keep benchmarks broad, but insert some level of specificity to make them easier to achieve
MPAs as part of the benchmarks are too contentious
Re MPAs, pull in jurisdictions of MPAs to collaborate and discuss projects
Focus MRC efforts to current management structure
Dead zones – need science to fill knowledge gaps
Explore educational partnerships with community colleges (Peninsula and Grays Harbor Community Colleges)
Include in benchmarks education and outreach re non-point pollution, especially to dairy and hobby farms
Train or fund college students for water quality education and sampling
Education and outreach about land use, erosion control, individual homeowner decisions
Build on current water quality testing and monitoring conducted by shellfish growers
Don't compete with watershed councils
Add "estuarine" to all benchmark categories
Include better Army Corps of Engineers and port dredge spoil management
Re hazards, focus on community and resource resilience (eg. wetlands protection)
Include enhancement activities such as fish ponds under the category "marine life"
Include as a benchmark "**balance** ecosystem focus and focus on target species"
Include a benchmark to "soften" the built environment
Include maintain health of value species/ stocks to prevent future ESA listing
Re the NWS categories, broaden "water quality"
Add "sustainable and resilient coastal communities" to benchmark categories. This includes cultural and economic sustainability
Under "habitat" add erosion and sediment management
Add an articulation of preventing issues from becoming hazards (prevention activities)
Benchmark should be to elevate citizen involvement in local and governmental decisions regarding raring resources (such as in the State Ocean Caucus and other planning activities)
Priority should be increase citizen access to marine resources. Increasing access should be the end goal and restoration, protection, and educational efforts are means to that end
New name for benchmarks (call them milestones, measures, goals...?)
Measure citizen involvement by functioning by the presence of a coalition focused on dredging, infrastructure protection and environmental protection and conveying that careful and responsible deposition of dredge spoil material with worth the extra time and cost.
Under "marine life" add fishing, improved access, as a measurable benchmark
Under new category "sustainable and resilient coastal communities" add "sustainable resource based industries"
Under priorities and re hazards, include increase public awareness and promote programs to avoid hazards – such as MRCs review city and county hazard mitigation plans
Broad concern that alternative energy interfering with coastal community viability
MRCs could use interest in ocean energy to promote information about ocean energy as part of MRC ed and outreach activities